

Michigan Opioids Task Force Racial Equity Workgroup - Fact Sheet

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront the deadly impact of health disparities on people of color. In May 2020, one of the third highest months for COVID-19 deaths, Black men were over 70 percent more likely to die from an overdose than their White counterparts. Data released in July of 2021 highlighted the urgency of more focused efforts specific to race and ethnicity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that addressed overdose fatalities noted a provisional and predictive 30 percent increase from 2019 to 2020 and a 16 percent increase across the state of Michigan. Provisional state data illustrates an overall 14 percent increase, including a 10 percent increase among the White population, a 14 percent increase among the Black population, a 21 percent increase among Other, and a 51 percent increase among Hispanic/Latinx. While the data has not yet been finalized, these increases, along with already present disparities, lay bare the urgency of Michigan's need to address racial and ethnic equity across the spectrum in prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery.

December 2022 - July 2023

On July 21, 2021, the Michigan Opioids Task Force voted to create a statewide Racial Equity Workgroup to target disparities in overdose fatalities among BIPOC. The Michigan Opioids Task Force was created in August 2019 to align departmental efforts to address the opioid epidemic in the state of Michigan. The task force is comprised of internal state government officials and tasked with providing policy recommendations to the department. Five key values guide the work:

1. Prioritize voices with lived experience.
2. Promote evidence-based strategies backed by a strong body of research.
3. Use data to inform strategy and track outcomes.
4. Collaborate with departmental partners and external stakeholders on response actions.
5. Remain action-oriented to address an ongoing crisis.

Convened in December 2022, the Racial Equity Workgroup supports the Michigan Opioids Task Force in developing a strategy to eliminate racial inequities in the response to overdose and resulting disparate outcomes in the state of Michigan. From December 2022 to July 2023, the Racial Equity Workgroup met eight times to accomplish the following goals:

1. Commit to ongoing learning from BIPOC with lived experience, analyzing data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and racial justice advocates related to health equity for people who use drugs and others affected by the overdose epidemic
2. Develop a strategic action plan using key findings and lessons from the Workgroup to guide the Michigan Opioids Task Force in developing a State Opioid Strategy and transforming systems to be more racially equitable
3. Act as an accountability partner to Michigan Opioids Task Force by supporting racially equitable actions and challenging racially inequitable actions

Workgroup members were selected based on the following qualifications:

1. Personal and/or professional experience with health/policy across the spectrum of care



- (health systems, service providers, governmental response) for people who use drugs.
2. Relationships with Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latinx and other POC community members and organizations, particularly those who use drugs.
 3. Time and availability to participate in 1.5 hour monthly meetings, as well as ~3 hours/month to review documents and communicate via email between meetings. Applicants who don't have access to necessary equipment can indicate so on their application, and our team will work to supplement what is needed.
 4. Passion for racial equity in the response to overdose and health in BIPOC communities.